

## **WSDOT Public Transportation and Rail Division Monthly Report November 2005**

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The WSDOT Public Transportation and Rail Division Monthly Report highlights the division's progress and milestones reached in these areas:

- Division News
  - Office of Transit Mobility
  - Public Transportation
  - Sound Transit
  - Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation
  - Passenger and Freight Rail
  - Commute Trip Reduction/Transportation Demand Management
  - Upcoming Events
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### **Division News**

#### **WSDOT reviews applications from two grant programs this month**

This month, WSDOT is reviewing grant applications for two programs: the 2006-2007 Regional Mobility Grant Program and the Trip Reduction Performance Program (TRPP). Details on both programs are included in this month's PT&R report.

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### **Office of Transit Mobility**

#### **WSDOT accepts applications for Regional Mobility Projects**

This month, WSDOT accepted applications for the 2006-2007 Regional Mobility Grant Program. The program funds public transportation projects that improve connections between transit agencies, rush hour transit on congested roadways, park and ride lots, and projects that reduce delay for people and goods. The deadline was November 1, and the project proposals are now being prioritized before submission to the Washington State Legislature on December 1. The Legislature will make the final determination on projects and awards.

"We commend the hard work of Representative Ed Murray and Senator Mary Margaret Haugen for creating the Regional Mobility Grant Program. We expect to see projects that move more people through congested corridors," said Doug MacDonald, Secretary of Transportation.

The Washington State Legislature provided \$20 million through the 2005 Transportation Partnerships Package to support the Regional Mobility Grant Program.

#### **WSDOT responds to demand for I-405 travel options during Kirkland construction**

Interstate 405 (I-405) connects drivers throughout the Puget Sound region to major employers like Boeing, Microsoft, and PACCAR. But a daily 6-10 hours of traffic congestion chokes the full potential of this artery — and the economic potential of the Puget Sound region. WSDOT is currently working with local communities and transit agencies to improve mobility on I-405 during planned highway construction. Efforts to manage congestion include:

- Scheduling construction road closures to minimize delays.
- Real-time travel information about traffic and buses will be available via TV and radio reports

- Email travel alerts. To join the I-405 listserve, email [lyris@lists.wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:lyris@lists.wsdot.wa.gov) with "subscribe I-405" in the body of the message.
- WSDOT and local web sites
- Electronic highway signs
- 511 telephone travel information
- Increasing public awareness
- More frequent transit service on key commuter routes
- New park and ride stalls at key locations
- Focused vanpool services on the corridor
- Increased ridematch services for commuters looking for options
- Direct support to businesses for employee commutes travel

More information about the I-405 projects, and the plan for improvements, is available at: <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/I405/>

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## Public Transportation

### WSDOT to host National Rural and Intercity Bus Conference

WSDOT is now planning for the 17th National Rural Public and Intercity Bus Transportation Conference scheduled for October 22-25, 2006. The Skamania Lodge and Conference Center in Stevenson, Washington was selected for the conference site. WSDOT is hosting the conference and recently met with members of the Transportation Research Board of the National Academies to tour the facilities and develop the conference program.

The conference goal is to advance state-of-the-art research and practice in intra-city and intercity rural bus transportation. The four-day conference will have multiple sessions addressing different subjects. Rural transit agencies, human service agencies, state transit and human service transportation programs, consultants, researchers, and trainers from across the nation will meet and exchange information. Save the dates and look for upcoming information.



Skamania Lodge, site of the 2006 Rural and Intercity Bus Conference.

### WSDOT provides public outreach at community events

WSDOT staff shares information about public transportation projects through community events and speaking opportunities. With these outreach efforts our staff communicates the value of public transportation to others. Last month:

- WSDOT hosted an information table at the 2005 Tribal/State Transportation Conference in Shelton on October 17. WSDOT provided information about tribal governments receiving 2005-2007 grants including Colville Confederated Tribes, Cowlitz Tribe, Makah Indian Council, Squaxin Island Tribe, and the Stillaguamish Tribe.
  - Safety and Asset Management Specialist Barb Savary spoke at the "Are You Ready?" Conference, a comprehensive emergency preparedness event for Puget Sound residents on October 21. Barb presented a workshop on public transportation safety and security.
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## Sound Transit (ST)

### Sound Transit Expert Review Panel meets

The Sound Transit Expert Review Panel, appointed to provide review of Sound Transit's Phase 2 Planning for the Regional Transit Long-Range Plan, held its third meeting last month. The panel discussed cost estimating and project evaluation methods and heard updates on the status of identifying potential new projects for high-capacity transit in the region.

The independent panel's role is to pose and assess critical questions, review key methodologies and assumptions in the Sound Transit 2 Plan, and ensure that the assumptions being used are appropriate and reasonable. Its technical review of the Sound Transit 2 Plan is necessary to guarantee that Sound Transit's Board can make appropriate decisions for Sound Transit 2 investments in the region's high-capacity transportation system.

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## Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation (ACCT)

### ACCT gathers feedback and develops work plan

In October, ACCT published a short on-line survey to gather feedback on program activities and stakeholder priorities. The survey was distributed to a wide audience of special needs transportation stakeholders including ACCT council members, transportation providers, transportation brokers, human service providers, employment agencies, legislators, riders, and advocates. Over 125 people responded, providing ACCT a wealth of information about where to focus future efforts, including:

- Removing barriers in policy and regulation
- Providing project development assistance
- Providing technical assistance through grant writing, facilitation, and regional planning
- Implementing the trip planner project

ACCT also used the survey results during a retreat on October 14 where members met to develop their work plan, budget, and legislative agenda for the 2005-2007 biennium. To see the survey results, visit [www.wsdot.wa.gov/acct](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/acct).

### ACCT participates in CalACT Conference

Marcy Jaffe, ACCT Outreach Liaison, attended the Annual California Association for Coordinated Transportation (CalACT) Conference last month. Marcy was an invited guest speaker for a technologies session: "Uniting Riders and Riders Using the Web." The panel discussion focused on how rural transit operators can maximize mobility options for riders through coordination and technology. Speakers described the challenges of marketing fragmented intercity services with multiple transportation providers and few resources. California representatives described their efforts to build a trip planning tool that will support many of the rural areas in the state that cannot afford trip planning software. Marcy described similar efforts in the Northwest and presented an overview of the Washington - Oregon trip planning project that will integrate with California's efforts.

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## Passenger and Freight Rail

### Record September ridership reported on Amtrak Cascades

This fall Amtrak reported increased ridership on its West Coast trains, including Amtrak Cascades. Amtrak attributes part of this growth to rising gasoline prices.

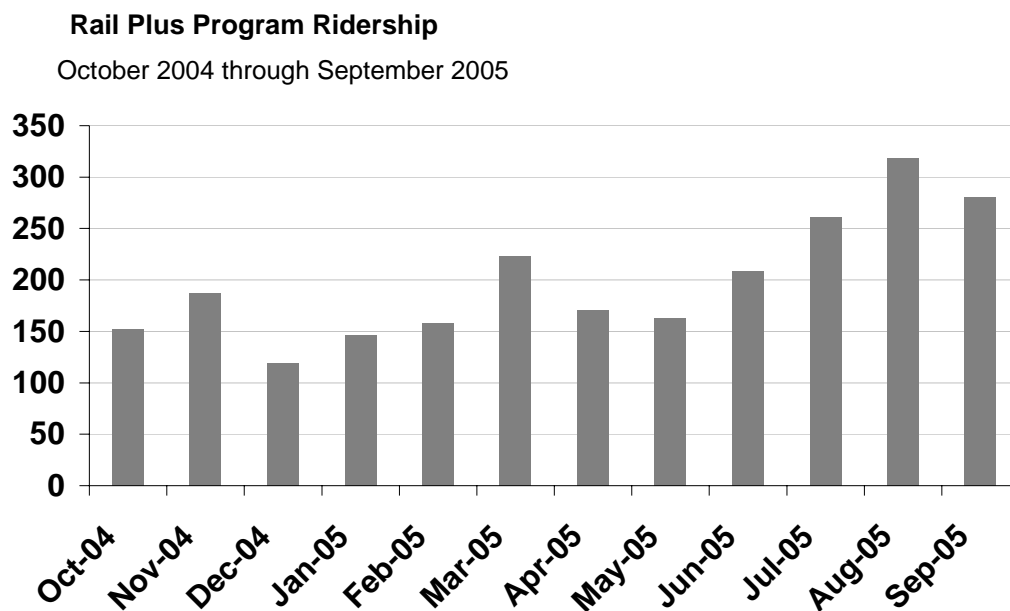
The months of July, August, and September are usually the peak ridership months for Amtrak Cascades. This trend continued in 2005, with 121,146 riders taking Washington State-supported Amtrak Cascades trains during the three-month period. This represents an 8.7 percent increase

over the third quarter of 2004. September's ridership was nearly 15 percent higher than September 2004. This significant increase in ridership was driven by several factors, including higher fuel cost for automobile travel.

Evidence from around the country suggests that more people are using transit and rail for their local and intercity trips due to rising gasoline prices. If fuel prices remain high, it is likely that Amtrak *Cascades* trains will continue to experience ridership increases above the 2 to 3 percent annual growth of recent years.

### **RailPlus pilot program extended**

WSDOT and Sound Transit (ST) recently extended the RailPlus pilot program agreement that began in October 2004. RailPlus was extended for nine months, through June 30, 2006, and provides passengers who hold a FlexPass, PugetPass, or University of Washington U-pass more travel options by offering cross ticketing between Amtrak *Cascades* and *Sounder* trains traveling between Everett, Edmonds, and Seattle. The graph below shows how RailPlus ridership increased over the past year:



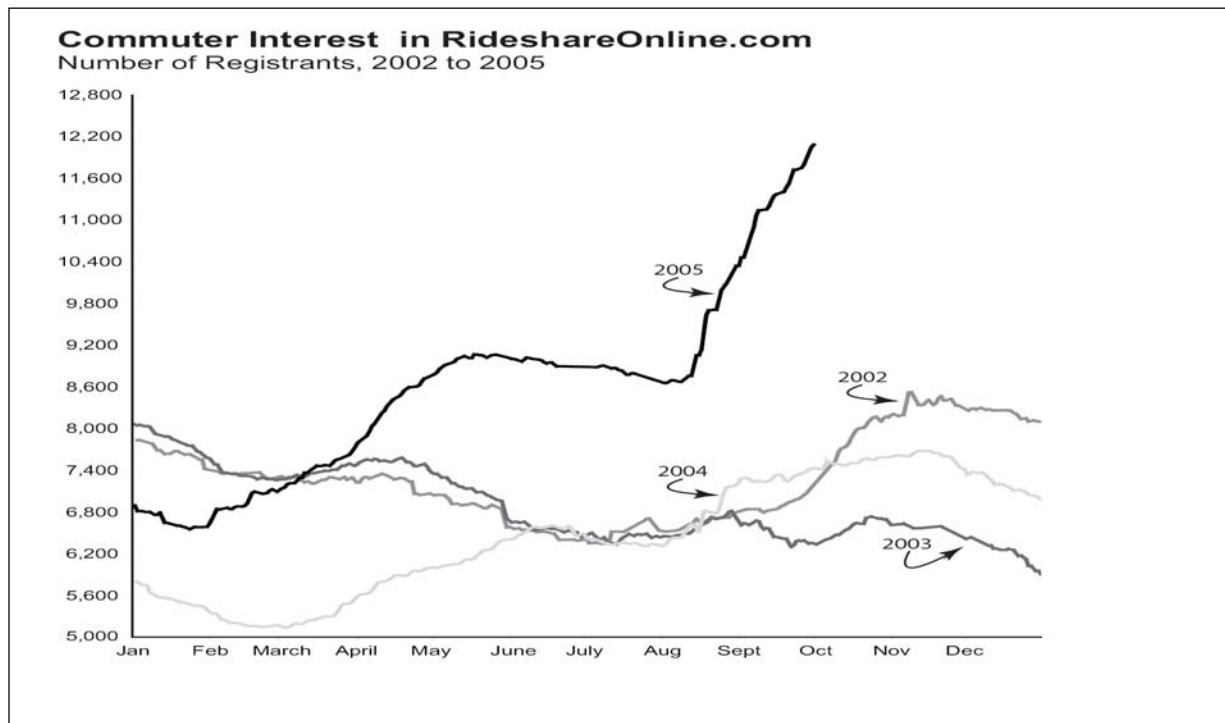
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### **Commute Trip Reduction/Transportation Demand Management**

#### **Record vanpool numbers reported at Transportation Commission meeting**

Secretary of Transportation Doug MacDonald announced record vanpooling numbers at the October meeting of the State Transportation Commission. In August 2005 statewide vanpool ridership stood at nearly 15,000 daily riders, a 20 percent increase over the level of two years ago. This is one of several areas WSDOT is informally monitoring to detect travel behavior changes that may be associated with the recent high levels of gas prices.

Peter Thein, Executive Director of the Washington State Transit Association, commented, "Vanpooling is one of the great success stories of public transit in Washington State." Vanpool operators have told WSDOT they expect the ridership returns for September and October to be even higher, setting new records.



Interest in ridesharing parallels the increase in vanpool ridership. As of September 2005, over 14,000 individuals had sought ride-matches from [RideshareOnline.com](http://RideshareOnline.com), a statewide service that introduces commuters who want to vanpool or carpool to work. RideshareOnline.com also assists operators in developing new vanpools or finding riders for existing vanpools. WSDOT invested in expanding RideshareOnline.com to a statewide service early in 2005, contributing to more than 60 percent growth in rideshare applications in the first nine months of the year compared with the same period in 2004. A survey is being developed to track successful matches and the persistence of the groups formed.

### WSDOT concludes public awareness campaign and vanpooling incentives

Recent marketing and financial incentives encouraged people concerned about rising fuel costs and long commutes to give vanpooling a try. WSDOT just wrapped up the fall installment of the vanpooling public awareness campaign, "Freewheeling: Vanpooling is your trip, your way," from late September through early October. Repeating and reinforcing the spring 2005 campaign, fall advertising included outdoor billboards, radio ads, and signs on the sides of buses.

Billboards and radio ads for the fall campaign were purchased with \$40,000 in federal oil rebate funds and \$14,000 from Ben Franklin Transit, a member of the Statewide Vanpool Team. Future funding for the "Freewheeling" campaign will come from contributions of other transit agency members of the Statewide Vanpool Team.



"Freewheeling" features vanpools in settings across the state and directs potential riders to [RideshareOnline.com](http://RideshareOnline.com)



Registration for financial incentives as part of the “Freewheeling” campaign ended October 31. As data becomes available, WSDOT will report on the numbers of people taking advantage of incentives and on ridership growth.

### **WSDOT calls for Trip Reduction Performance Program (TRPP) proposals**

WSDOT called for proposals for the Trip Reduction Performance Program (TRPP) on October 20. TRPP was established to encourage entrepreneurs, private companies, transit system, cities, and non-profit organizations to create programs to motivate employees to get out of their cars and into buses, carpools, trains and vanpools.

The program reimburses start-up costs for winning projects—up to fifty percent of the awarded funds. The balance will be awarded to each winning project based on performance, as documented in surveys taken before and after the project begin.

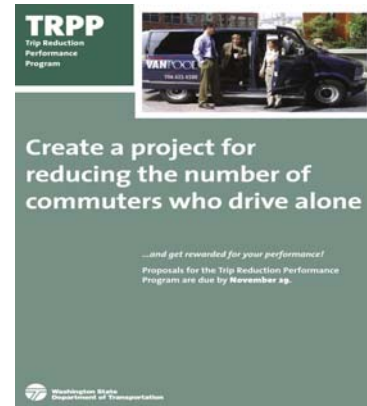
The deadline for applications is November 29, 2005. Winning projects will be announced on January 14, 2006. The program could distribute \$1.5 million in performance and bonus funds.

There will be three training sessions to assist prospective applicants in preparing their TRPP proposals:

- November 2 in Lacey
- November 4 in Spokane
- November 8 in Bothell

To register, contact Robin Hartsell at [hartser@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:hartser@wsdot.wa.gov) or (360) 705-7508.

Organizations interested in developing proposals can get the application and more information at [http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/tdm/program\\_summaries/trpp\\_intro.cfm](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/tdm/program_summaries/trpp_intro.cfm)



This new brochure markets the TRP Program.

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## **Announcements**

### **WSDOT congratulates 2005 AdWheel Award winners**



**Pierce Transit, Lakewood** (shown above)  
Illustrated Bus: "Point Defiance Zoo Bus"

**C-TRAN, Vancouver**  
Shoestring Campaign: "Summer Blast Pass"

Each year, the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) holds a nationwide competition for highlighting outstanding advertising, marketing, promotion, and communications materials.

Washington State brought home several top honors at the 2005 AdWheel Awards competition. WSDOT congratulates these transit systems:

**Intercity Transit, Olympia**

Advertisement – Promotion: "New Car Smell"

**King County Metro, Seattle**

Map: "Get Around U-District & North Capitol Hill"

Passes & Tickets: "Free Ride"

Schedule Notice/Timetable: "Elliott Bay Water Taxi"

**Sound Transit, Seattle**

Billboards/Outdoor Advertising: "Been Sitting There A While?"

Video Presentation: "In Motion Video Magazine, Year-End Episode"

Internet Home Page: "www.soundtransit.org"

**Upcoming Events**

**Commute Trip Reduction Task Force Meeting**

Friday, November 18

11:00 a.m.– 2:00 p.m.

Tukwila Community Center

12424 – 42<sup>nd</sup> Avenue S., Tukwila

For more information, contact Shelley Pedro at (360) 705-7846 or [pedros@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:pedros@wsdot.wa.gov)

**Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation**

Friday, December 2

9:30 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

To confirm time and location, visit: [www.wsdot.wa.gov/acct/acct\\_meetings.htm](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/acct/acct_meetings.htm)

**17th National Rural Public and Intercity Bus Transportation Conference**

Sunday, October 22–Wednesday, October 25, 2006

Skamania Lodge and Conference Center

Stevenson, Washington

For more information, contact Robin Phillips at (360) 705-7929 or [phillir@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:phillir@wsdot.wa.gov)

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The WSDOT Public Transportation and Rail Division prepares this monthly newsletter as a service to those interested in the activities of the division and its partners within the agency. For questions regarding newsletter articles, please contact Tonia Buell, communications manager, at [buellt@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:buellt@wsdot.wa.gov) or 360-705-7439. To receive email announcements when a new issue is published, please send a blank email message to [ptr-news-join@lists.wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:ptr-news-join@lists.wsdot.wa.gov).